

SUBMISSIONS



Conversation between Aav and Alain Viguié

Part 2

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SUBMISSION

Conversation between Aav and Alain Viguier at Spec&Editions.

Object art

New modern abstraction. Part 2

July 2018

Bracketed additions are by Arthur Rose (connoisseur).

DAY 1

— Alain Viguier: We said we would continue the last conversation we had (published) in 2005.* What has changed since then?

— Aav: Nothing really. We will be saying almost the same things. Its the same object oriented work, the same self-referential “absolute” Object (capital O). But a lot has been changing in the world since then.

— Your main reference in making Object art has been Ad Reinhardt.

— Yes, after Stella’s object-paintings had turned his Ultimate Painting(s) into a literal object, the unitary object, the object-as-object, the nothingness of its negative definition, the sameness of the objects. The dark night (Reinhardt).

— But that’s only half the story. The object is detached from an erased background. Its nothingness comes from switching off relational activity.

— If you look at Reinhardt’s collected writings, half of them are about the background: about the conditions in which his ultimate painting is to be shown, handled, administrated, in what he called the Museum Academy. The associated environment of a “finished” (limited) painting.

— In the framework of one-way causation the painting always comes first.

— Yes, but since then art (art, theory and curatorial studies) has so largely explored the works’ relational activities and corresponding contexts as to enable us today to see the work’s associated environment as correlative, rather than simply secondary to it.

— The ultimate painting’s solipsist closure, far from making it univocally autonomous, demands, like any other object in art, a particular context in which to be maintained: shown, handled and administrated. For example its disjunction from the architectural site is, as such, indicative of a particular relation to the site. Object and context are locally exclusive at an attentional level, but nevertheless complementary to one another. They are bound together in processes as contiguous two faces of a same work.

— A work is self-referential, made to be showing itself, but it can’t exist without also being shown.

— Yes, and we can’t observe at the same time the object and its relations to other things. If you acknowledge the background, that is a field of external relation, and its correlation with the object, you can’t do it without accounting for observational switches, the crossing of a border.

— Reinhardt did not see that erased background context as being correlative to his painting, even though he wrote a lot about it, it remained subconscious, yet haunting perception.

— Duchamp’s readymade(s) was also haunted by its context, and still is...

— Reinhardt was a formalist, he believed in the inherence of meaning to form, form having a sort of essence. Duchamp emerged with those that overturned this belief.

— In Reinhardt’s one-way causation his ontology presupposed the object as origin. This wasn’t the case for Duchamp for whom “the viewers make the work”.

— Approaching the object in a correlation with its context (associated environment) turns ontology into an ontogenesis. The object exists in a dynamic field of reciprocal causal relations, it is all in the mutual disposition between the object’s powers and an environment in which they are actualised.

— Sally Price said, speaking of works of “Primitive Art” that to perceive them would be “to acknowledge the existence and legitimacy of the aesthetic frameworks within which they were produced”. Nothing has changed.

— Making a shift to the object view entails a cascade of readjustments to be made across the whole culture-bound system. Where do we start?

— The “return” of an object-as-object meant taking on board all the sins that non-object art had rejected with the “easel painting” and “modernist painting”: self-reflexivity (tautology), abstraction, sitelessness, timelessness, unity, limitation, stasis (instantaneity)... At the time of our last conversation the object-as-object still had a bad press. Is the assumption that the object you are dealing with is the one non-object rejected still as entrenched?

— Not as badly, but there is no general agreement as to what else could be.

— A “return” to the object is not a return to the past, rather it is the past recovered in our present that measures the distance separating us from it.

— The Object is not a negation of non-object art (as non-object art was a negation of the object), because non-object art never escaped being an object, treated and titled as such. Art, from a formal object became a processual object (an iterative pattern). It may be dematerialised but it can be repeated as the “same work” at different times and places. I see non-object as a redefinition of what an object is in art. This does not mean that non-object art is Object art, it means that most non-object works can be viewed as objects (as having a border). It is an addition, they lose nothing from it.

— The object is correlated, yet disjointed from the context, it is not in an opposition to it, as non-object had it. It is another way of getting access to the context.

— Whatever the work be, object-like or non-object (including contextual works), it always implies a particular contextual framework in order that it be the work it is. From this disjunction the object, any artwork, exists in a field of external relations. It is correlated with a supplementary dimension.

— The context is approached very differently than with contextual art, which, because it is non-object (conceived as unlimited and immersive), can’t account for what is happening beyond its internal syntax, at the outer side of its boundary (in spite of its project to breach the border between art and life or art and politics) .

— The Object can be seen as a methodological option giving access to its outside.

— In the exhibition context we constantly shift from implementing a work to maintaining it without even

noticing the switch. Installing (sometimes rebuilding), exhibiting and administrating a work (maintenance) is inseparable from implementing it. No two works are maintained in the same way. The curatorial context is the distribution of a collective of practices that is perfectly correlated with the object, separated from it by an indiscernible, yet definite, boundary.

— We have worked since the early 1990s showing correlations between contemporary artworks and their context through curatorial practices, which have become a casuistry, tailored for each individual case.

— A work as a fact has a mode of existence, a way of interacting with the practices of the curator, installer, restorer, collector, photographer, expert, lawyer, critic, the work of other artists and so on. But in all cases we begin by implementing the work as a viewer (in the first order).

— Switching across a border from first order viewing to second order viewing and back again. Traditionally art is set in first order viewing, which is entirely focused on the work. Second order viewing includes the context and the participant-observer. We have the disjunction I mentioned earlier (we can only observe the object or the relations).

— We are learning in a new way to think about ourselves as participants in what we observe.

— Wasn't that already in minimalism's program?

— Minimalism's site specific work (Morris) that includes the environment and the viewer with the object, is not what I call second order viewing. Because the work, being conceived as unlimited in space and time, is immersive, and identified with the viewer's experience of it, it is a negation of the object it is.

— As Kuhn wrote about the paradigm: "Like the gestalt switch, it must occur all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all." (1962) Without the switch it makes no sense.

— I like Kuhn's perspectival realism. It may ask for a little effort, but once the switch is made it is as if things had always been that way.

— The shift from post-object to object happened for you all at once in a single leap.

— A summersault. I don't know how I got into making panels, but one of them turned overnight into an Object. It was in February 1989 at Le Salon des Anonymes where it was on show.

— Following the encounter you unhook your phone for a week.

— ...

— From the perspective of the established paradigm your work makes no sense and can only be seen as outlandish.

— Bifurcating outside the binary opposition between object and non-object meant falling outside the horizon of those rolling in its tracks.

— The artist practicing is a sort of automaton. We were saying in our previous conversation that the author's signature, the way a work works and its event are all interrelated. The work makes the artist as the artist makes the work... the way a work works is its own signature as well as the artist's.

— Author names are signatures, not real or fictive persons.

— Art comes from a logical possibility within art. The author enacts that possibility, tests it... It is what I call a proposition, and a hypothesis (as to its future public existence) because it is played out as if it was to be seen retrospectively as having been (hypothetical). It can indeed seem personal, foolish and outlandish when you're the only one doing it. But then you are back in the mind-frame of personalisation.

— What is the most impersonal can appear as embarrassingly personal (private).

— Since you are addressing the sphere of opinion you have to endorse its mode of subjectivation. Personalise audacity and playfulness and you get what is seen as provocation and megalomania. It is a sort of normative defence mechanism (which have a degree of truth) in which you can only be a clown.

— The work's powers are impersonal and machinelike, detached from subjectivity. Yet the autonomy of the work implies an autonomous production of subjectivity beyond the territories to which it is assigned by opinion.

— In these circumstances the necessary assertion of artistic authority can only be its own parody.

— You have to choose. It is "as if" or it is not at all. Something can't be if it hasn't first been "as if" it could to be. As Duchamp put it: "the viewers who make the work", i.e. the conditions of emergence do or don't occur. The readymade only makes sense in a reception environment (a collective of humans and nonhumans), in a context and a state of the world corresponding with it.

— This is to be avant-garde.

— In the sense of *avant la garde*: before the work’s emergence and its maintenance, before its participant-guards. Retrospectively, it is the successors that create their forerunners... history is also written backwards.

— An avant-garde is by nature unrecognisable. It is only retrospectively that it can be seen as having once been avant-garde. It would therefore be absurd for it to depend on recognition.

— The avant-gardist as a victim of society (*l’artiste maudit*) is a bed-time story.

— The myth of the avant-gardist as victim sustains the belief in a transcendental subject who failed to recognise the artist when he could have or should have (the salvation of a certain conception of free will). If the myth nevertheless has some truth to it, it is not because of the failure to acknowledge the artist who is in a blind spot of communication, it is because the ordinary all-seers react no differently than any brainless organism irritated by something foreign to it.

— Object art’s project is somehow already realised in the potential event it implicates, before even its actual explications in public space. It has been made once and for all, wether it becomes publicly actualised or not.

— Yes, we have already made this clear. Still, is this implication of a framework not a dependency on the institution? “It is an art for the museum” to paraphrase Cézanne.

— I see... No I don’t think art and its institution are separate things. Institutions are not essentially what cages the subject but are codes in general, they are embodied in our behaviour, in practices, roles and worldviews. There is no outside to the institution. I do not see art operating outside the museum “prison-house” as artists of the seventies put it. I believe it has always been from the inside of old institutions that new institutions emerge. To believe in an extra-institutional subject or object is to allow the business of those in charge of these institutions to be foreign ton ours.

— Reciprocal causal relations between the work and its institutional framework set in with the process of emergence itself.

— If..., then... You have to have the effect to get the cause. There has to be a mutual disposition of re-lata.

— What has always been new about any work is not the object but the actualisation of its event. This means intra-institutional changes.

— A shift in perspective is necessary to perceive the work. This puts in question communication conceived as information traveling from one subjectivity to another. Make a shift from the prevalent perspective and the channel goes fuzzy.

— Communication needs a shared cognitive background and perspective, only then can minds match in perceiving and conceiving a (same) fact.

— Stereotypes, assumptions, tacit models, routine and so on provide a sound ground for communication. For the time we can at least make sense in explaining why making sense can fail.

— Censorship is both vertical and horizontal, remote and close, in lobbies as in opinion, in patrons as in peers, it is everywhere. This makes innovation inappropriate to cultural networks, clubs or coteries, and even to polemics or negotiation.

— Our friends generally don’t have a clue as to what we are really on about. Its only with critics or peers we could expect to exchange with professionally that things get complicated...

— Jean Claude Vignes has been an exception. He is an erudite philosopher-artist who favoured an aesthetic relation to life as much as to arts. Removed from professional implication and not having subordinated work(s) to any project or “vision”. Freedom and detachment as a condition for thinking made real. We have had regular conversations over the last 30 years without ever making a coterie of ideas (thanks to him).

— Unlike both of us!

— How is this “autonomous” production of subjectivity partaking of politics?

— When people think of politics it is generally about macro-politics, which is programatic and defined by projects. For them art has to have a purpose. The activist generally see the avant-gardist as inconsequential or irresponsible. You are locked in your ivory tower while they are doing all the sweaty and serious work of projected change.

— I am not projecting change, my work is not about change, it is what has already changed. This is no

disrespect for reformers doing the sweaty work of macro-politics as long as they do not ignore their own micro- politics and are aware of the political pitfall of negative solidarity.

— By putting forward your work as a proposition and not as a project (conversely the project, by definition, lives in the future-past tense), and our actual conversation, only addressed to a potential audience, is obviously expressing a distrust in classical communication concepts but also in decisional concepts.

— You never know if you are deciding for change or if change is deciding for you (which of you and the program is performing the other). There is loads of hair splitting academic research in decision theory and free will. The anthropocentric answer to it needs to be challenged because it is flawed.

— The entrenched conviction of the *Homunculus Narcissus Vulgaris* Marx called atoms, or potatoes when referring to the preindustrial French peasantry already ripe for state capitalism.

— The illusion of a transcendental subject (viewing from outside and above what is observed) still has a functional role in government politics and business but it has been vanishing from science.

— And in art we are speaking of a participant viewer in context (called the spect-actor in the previous conversation).

— From the point of view of Object art receivership is not only constituted by the classical generic interchangeable subjects of universality and/or of community. A field is the distribution of a collective. A community is a collection of individuals defined through what they have in common, a collective is a machine in which humans and non-humans are coupled together, it is a distribution of functions, of performed roles, which can be shared cognitively by each participant.

— You mean like the Leibnizian fish for whom to know it is inside a fish pond all the other fish including the pond have to be inside it.

— Yes, a subject is both a collective as well as a singular position in the collective. A plural participant.

— What Relational Aesthetics progressively introduced was a crisis of the generic spectator which culminated with Participative Art and with Social Activism in the 1990s. Spectators are participants in a multi-player game for which the collective is a more relevant concept.

— In these orientations the site has become the social situation in which the work occurs but, despite the heterogeneity of this situation, it is conceived more as a community (of interchangeable individuals) than

as a collective (of distributed roles).

— We have made no mention of emotions or taste which are concepts so central to art and aesthetics.

— Emotions and taste in art belong largely to subjectivity, they are a translation of the position you take in the game relatively to a fact (evaluative predicates are an expression of such a position). They are not to be ignored (as in Duchamp's anaesthetic), I just don't think they should be generalised. I am interested in the more objective (transpersonal) side of art.

— For an evaluative and positional feeling to occur we must presuppose we are relating to something outside ourself that has a degree of objectivity.

— Even those who react to contra-standard works partake in their objectivation because the debate itself presupposes that what we are all referring to is (objectively) the same thing.

— And positions themselves are objective in constituting an overall system (collective).

— This of course is not to prevent emotion or beauty to matter for other types of art. For every type of art there is necessarily a blocking-out of regions.

DAY 2

— Art is its own philosophical laboratory.

— The artist's discourse is not poetic, it is not about liberating the signifier from the constraints of a referent, on the contrary it is about a match with the referent. It could maybe be seen as poetic because more words get precise more they get slippery, and you are skating on thin ice.

— There is no reference to something "as it is" without its coming into existence through its perspective and description (mapping). There is something poetic about the plasticity of the real.

— Unlike academics, artists can overtly be charlatans because discourse is only half of the picture.

— Yes, art exists physically. There is a physicality to the event (context, field), but what about the physicality of the Object?

— I only make what I call panels, or have them made. An Object is a panel viewed as an Object, there has to be a verb in the noun. Panels are variable in shape and colour but they always are the same Object.

— There is no inherence of an Object to a panel. The spectator must also be a "painter". Materially (formally) you will never paint a panel into an Object, you can only do your best.

— There is no such thing as a sound beginning. The foundation-walls are carried by the whole house. There is no truth without the conditions and procedures of veridication that goes with it (the process by which a "fact" becomes recognised and accepted as such).

— You say a panel is not art.

— I mean it the same way Morris did when he spoke of his cubes only being a part of the artwork. It is prosaic. A date, title or signature is no more relevant to it than it is to an ironing board or a bathroom fitting. If you put the art only in the panel the work just doesn't work the way it is made to.

— Someone asked me if the Object had a meaning.

— The meaning is the fact, the event itself.

— The theory is not a supplement to the work, it should vanish once you get the work into perspective and working. Its meaning is in what it does and makes us do. A work's explications (the unfolding of its implications) are no explanation to it.

— The contextual framework in which our body partakes is the transparent medium of an aesthetic relation, it is fluid and fused with the cognitive processes themselves.

— While at the same time the eye can be disembodied and fly like Alberti's winged eye, but even then it somehow has to envelope in itself the body and the material world it flies in. (Again, the fish cannot be in the pond if the pond is not also in the fish)

— Would you say it belongs more to sculpture than to painting?

— It is not a question of overcoming an opposition between material and transparent media as in modern painting or concrete poetry because there is no opposition, only ways of weaving one through the other. Once this is made clear we can say that the two extremes of sculpture and painting still subsist and that Object art leans more on the side of relief sculpture.

— Sculpture addresses more directly the viewers central nervous system. For me what is specific to art is that it exists physically in one way or the other. Intellection is bound with the material world.

— The object's physicality has extended from its body to its own collective performative event. Most obviously with "dematerialised" works that need much curatorial maintenance in order to exist.

— We have privileged literalness over the metaphorical. The metaphor belongs to the object of first order observation which can be itself observed in the literal setting of second order observation.

— I am reluctant to depth, to its absorptiveness, its hermeneutics... attention being immersed, we miss acknowledging the perspective and the situation in which a fact is actualised and observed.

— Self-reflexivity, literalness, factuality, physicality are words we often use as New Moderns...

— Yes, Modern in the sense art gives itself to be seen with the concrete means of its own production (and reception). Shifting from modernist materialism's inert matter to a processual materialism.

— We seem to forget it was still the project of contemporary art in its early phase. It (modern self-reflexivity and literality) was central to minimalism, conceptual art, process art, subjective performance art...

— Work reflecting on its own material conditions of existence. But we must know that there is no self-identity, nothing to reflect upon without the perspective the thing brings upon itself. Like any other work the self-reflexive entity needs to be implemented by its own rules.

— Yes, as with Stella's early object-paintings seen as paintings by Fried and as objects by Judd, or Duchamp's readymade seen by Warhol as commonplace artefacts and by William Tucker as modernist sculpture (viewed in the round). Viewed from different paradigm backgrounds similar forms can be all together different facts. All of them are self-reflexive but they are neither seen nor shown (neither implemented nor maintained) in the same way.

— In monochrome painting we find an incredible variety of referential procedures and of different facts (modes of existence) in almost similar forms. They infer quite different events. As with Danto's nine perfectly identical monochrome paintings having "radically different ontological origins".

— The self-reflexive object by reflecting its own conditions of existence in second order observation scatters reflexivity in all directions beyond any idea of wholeness. The object of consciousness enfolds (implicates) its field (mind), but consciousness can only navigate the field (mind) by unfolding one explanation at a time in practice or imagination (simulation).

— The context is a medium we see, we think and act with more often than something we see, think about and act upon. Reflexivity always gets you into trouble because the system you are looking at (reflecting on) is always too much part of the system you are looking and acting through. Whatever is the degree of opacity and reflexivity we bring to the context it always remains liminal and withdrawn.

— But self-reflexivity is the initial condition for art. The elementary character of a work is to exhibit itself. It is by condition ostentatious.

— Between "exhibiting itself" and "being exhibited" there has been no clear separation since as early as the 18th century. Its exhibitory nature (abstraction, self-reference, ostentation), physicality (its physical instantiation in the museum) and aesthetic viewing (detachment, "disinterestedness") are terms in a set where subject and object have been entangled.

— In second order observation this erased background operates as an archive (in the sense of Fou-

cault) and as a technical apparatus (the curatorial maintenance frame). The museum is what constitutes art's observational framework at both cognitive and practical levels (episteme and techne, software and hardware).

— Early in the last century Duchamp already started revealing the porosity of the boundaries between the artistic (production) and the aesthetic (reception), between the work's ostentatiousness (self-reflexivity) and the museum's exhibition function (abstraction and ostentation). By the late 1960s the separations between production (the artist), implementation (the spectator) and maintenance (the actors), was completely blurred. (Artists were addressing actors, not only viewers as active participants in their work)

— This is how material and processual constituents of the background have become components of the works themselves and, after a few decades of contextual art and curatorial studies, how artists have brought into view the "museum as medium" and finally arrived at the exhibition of the exhibition.

— Still these works continue to operate against an erased background... Contextual art has operated in a conjunction with the context, not from disjunction and correlation. It is immersive, compositional and, because there is an unacknowledged associated environment it is split off from, it tends to be theatrical (scenarised, staged). No work could include into itself the whole of its context without vanishing into it. However extensive non-object or contextual art is it (structurally) operates against an erased background. We only have access to the background (context) by acknowledging the disjunction between the object of first order observation and the field of second order observation.

— Initially abstraction was seen as blocking our perception of the contextual conditions in which a thing appeared, but the new art ended by doing exactly what it had set out to criticise. As Buren said: when the work appears the museum disappears. But we have to turn his contextual work on its head to discover in its residual substance an ecstatic field.

— An object's stillness and limitation allows for the simultaneousness and the instantaneity of myriad folded timelines (event), it doesn't favour a dominant unfolding timeline in actual experience.

— In the case of an Object, because there is so little to get from inside it, you might as well observe what's happening on its external side.

— This, paradoxically, takes one step further the avant-garde project of a processual, unlimited and immersive work, of a work that has merged with its own perspective and ontogenesis, it takes one step further the criticism of an observer that stands outside what is observed.

— We have added first and second order observations as two complementary dimensions of a same work, to any work, not just to an Object.

— As curators, for the Object and for different artworks, we have exhibited in each case the exhibition of something, the exhibition wasn't itself this something.

— But showing and speaking of non-object works as objects, as we have been doing, wasn't consistent with the artists' intentions (but they were kind enough to play the game). The difference with Object art is that it is.

— How do you implement and maintain adequately this sort of thing in order it be the thing it is? Whether you are in charge of making, installing, displaying, lighting, restoring, collecting, storing, reproducing, cataloging, documenting, copyrighting, describing, or just viewing that thing, you are necessarily answering that question.

— We have exhibited “dematerialised” works, works that only exist in contracts and protocols needing to be reconstructed for each exhibition, works existing physically only in documents.

— The same way you transfer Object art.

— “Dematerialised” works (which today include digital media) have shown that a collector doesn't own an object and doesn't even own an idea. What he (or she) owns is a right to show (publicly actualise), or not show, a work as a work by the author (purely immaterial moral right and intellectual property).

— I like the way Michael Asher put it : “The contractual demands, then, do not limit and control the circumstances under which the work could be reconceived for another site /.../. Rather, the contractual demands pronounce the terms provided by the work itself.”

— There is a jurisprudence (case law) in the aesthetic relation to every work. The art takes care of itself in engaging its own conditions of existence.

— Yes, otherwise (i.e. improperly shown) its consistence would just evaporate and it would turn into something else. As Buren put it, if we inadequately show his work it no longer can be attributed to him.

— Before going on to talk further about its external dimension what about the Object in first order observation?

— The dark night. Its presence is our presentness to ourselves as Cavell would say. If you want to turn it into an existential affair it might as well be a therapeutic exercise in separating from melancholy (the mourning of self) and the big Other (in you) like the dross at the bottom of your pipe. But its “emptiness” is not just the switching off of consciousness, it is a severing of consciousness from mind.

— An object in first order observation coexists with a field of external virtual relations and effects (as physical and intellectual powers). All the possible (potential) relations are virtually simultaneous, co-present with it. Without the virtual enfolded in the actual the phenomenon (the experienced entity) would have neither depth, consistence or sense. To the 3 dimensional Object you have to add its 4th dimension, to consciousness its mind.

— The paradoxical actuality of the unactual within the actual.

— While the object can be held in consciousness at once, relations can only be unfolded in practice or imagination sequentially and successively for each relation. But each actual instant in a sequence contains virtually the whole sequence and all the relations coexist virtually as the object's field and as a dynamic event engaging a collective.

— An event is independent from the actualisation of its relations, it has somehow always already happened. Only, it will be seen as having preceded the actual once actualised.

— The future has no time in store. The future is now (i.e. a future beyond the future-past horizon line).

— The 3 dimensional object belongs to consciousness while its 4th dimension (the event) belongs to the mind. The erased background in observation is the unconscious we share with the object in perceiving it.

— Subject and object share the same unconscious while the knowing subject and the known object, mind and world, overlap and match one another. The inferential (predictive) capacity of the statistical brain is entangled with all these virtual relations simultaneously. Neuroscientists have been imaging massive unconscious processing concomitant with object perception.

— An object of consciousness (phenomenon) is produced from its field, not from in itself. Mind is on the side of a scattered (dispersed) actual and virtual (but nonetheless real) world as it is inside our head.

— The field is to an object what mind is to consciousness.

— We flip from entity to field, from phenomenon to mind, from synthetic to analytic, from implicate to

explicate and back again, it is an art more for the mind than for the eye.

— The Object is visual but the art is liminal and, so to speak, un-visual, beyond phenomena and representation.

— In your studio you make panels and you treat them as Objects in showing, handling and administering them. It is the physical component of Spec your studio-gallery.

— To paraphrase Reinhardt: all panels are the same Object. The studio is important because myself and the Object have bodies and an Object, even if virtual, is a physical event. It is the place of physical actualisation of the Object and of the context in which it is maintained, even though only images come out of it.

— How are panels made?

— Panels can be made in all sorts of ways, from a sketch, a folded cut-out, a string pinned on the wall... and colours chosen in any way. An algorithm for the random-generation of shapes and colours can be a good partner. I use acrylic paint on canvas for their saturated, ordinary and extraverted qualities. Shape is symmetrical, so it doesn't start sliding on the wall. It is kept simple because as soon as you increase the number of sides to it the more chances it will start looking like all sorts of other things than a panel. The edges are unpainted and quite thick, à la early Stella, which make the whole into an object.

— The algorithm is illustrative by shifting the object from the randomly produced shape and colour of the panel to the algorithm itself. The object being what remains the same within the variations (it has no before or after).

— you don't claim the exclusivity of making panels. The ones you did make were often abandoned after being shown or given away and you keep very few in store.

— I only negotiate with certificates, not with objects. The certificate entitles to exhibit a work of Object art signed with my name. I have been producing one a year since 1989. But this does not make the work simply conceptual. Making panels I like the studio to stay quite bare so as to leave whatever is there stand out. I feel its at work even when it is left at rest because between what has been done and not yet done there is very little difference. Time in making one is a sort of eternal present because it is finished (and often lost) before even being started. You can revert time and find hardly any difference.

— You also make images beside your editions.

— I call them rhizomes because they are completely independent from one another and generally only make sense in connection to more central concerns in my work. I make them as illustrations, publicity, observations, notes... when they feel necessary. They are not made to have the self-sufficiency artworks generally have.

— They are generally digital collages, made roughly, and in the most economical way. What is important in an image is not to like it but to get it in some way, even if it looks sometimes stupidly redundant.

— They are not physically precious since the master copies are digital and that their media and formats are often unfixed.

— Nor particularly original either, most of the material being stolen from other images (for minimising effort).

— Some of them are used as illustrations in your editions and book-gallery Spec & Spec Editions where you also show panels (Object[s]).

— The still image of a panel needs to be implemented like any other pictured work. You only need to consider the flat and incomplete image on the retina to know that the 2 dimensional image virtually en-folds the 3rd and 4th dimensions, if only to be recognisable.

— An image of a thing enfolds to a large extent the same virtual possibilities the real thing has. Exhibition catalogues would interest no one if they were only referring to past occurrences and not to present and potential future ones.

— I like the way Seth Siegelaub inverted the priority of the exhibition over the catalogue and made of the book a primary exhibition space.

— The document can be retrospective as it can be prospective. Is the book showing a record (after the fact), a simulation or a project, or is it the exhibition itself? A same image can slip between these categories or combine them together.

— I try to locate the image between the photographic record (analog) and the project through collage and the use of photoshop (simulation), between being retrospective and prospective. I would like to link the past with the future above the eluded present of the image.

- We can't separate what is presented as an empirical fact from the contextual transparent mediums of language, images and techniques and the perspectival framework they take part in. Whether the fact is presented as belonging to the past, the present or the future-past the presentation is similarly active in modelling its perception.
- Even the assumption that the critic's discourse comes after the fact is an illusion.
- Like the exhibition the book is in its own way what you see with as well as what you look at.
- The aim is to publicise work which itself parodies publicity. But then self-derision and irony undermine a lot the seriousness of the matter at hand.
- I think it means the matter can matter for itself. We are not to testify of something from a background of a priori shared values. Empathy is undermined by apathy in communication.
- It is the sort of publicity inviting you to find out what exactly is being publicised.
- What about a last word about the art market, generally considered the lowest part of the system, being moved by extra-artistic forces.
- The museum, galleries and the market are the main systems in the artworld operating the cultural sedimentation of art, its popularisation and its obsolescence. Definitely, a work's bigger success is to end as a stereotype and a commodity, as sedimented dead wood for fuelling another emerging institution.
- It is no surprise that a market value gets often confused with a property of a work. But market value does not provide the term of a relation (a relatum). There is no relation, it is a purely quantitative (liquid) measure of a degree of exposure, independently from any calculation. To the synthetic version we have to add the scattered version: add up the various investments in its production and maintenance (exposure) context, you should get roughly the same amount the buyer pays.

* Part 1 online at: <http://spec-speceditions.net/archive/objectart.htm>

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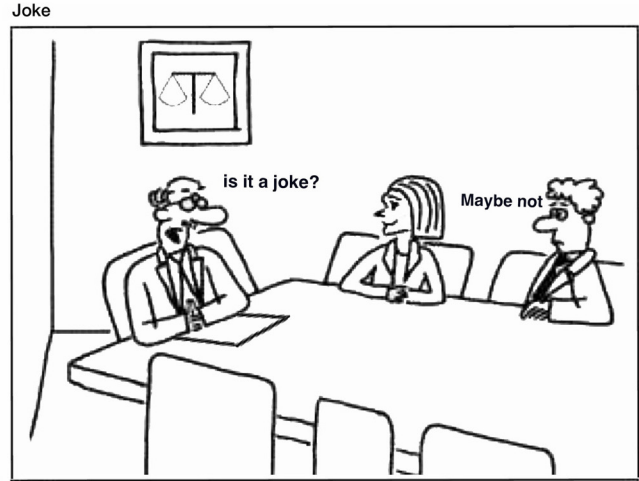
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WAS STELLA A MODERNIST PAINTER OR WAS HE A MINIMALIST OBJECT-MAKER? OR WAS HE BOTH? *

Should the Modernists (▲ Clement Greenberg and ▲ Michael Fried) and the Minimalists (▲ Robert Morris, ▲ Donald Judd and ▲ Carl Andre) assume they are speaking of the same painting?*

1967

* Answer to question on following page

You got it wrong Carl, Frank's soul is ours

No, he's an object maker like us

Look, this is a painting. You can't confuse its pictorial surface with its support, you can't confuse its scale with its size...

Oh yes you can

The modular figure asserts the unity of the whole. Your body is addressed as well as your eye

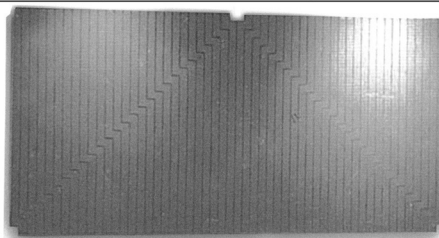
Yes, that's right. The figure is only loosely interdependent with the shape of the support, and it can expand beyond its edge

The figure is the shape. He even gets the depth of the canvas into the modular figure. That makes it more like an object

The «deep canvas» makes it more like a painting, said Stella

That's puzzling... He makes us that close to Manet?

See how the figure lifts up from the raw canvas showing between the stripes



I can't see any illusionism there. It's a three-dimensional slab built from industrial materials, the aluminum paint is more material-like than colour

He tried to keep the paint as good as it was in the can

It still is pictorial

No, it's literal

That's completely incongruous with modernist values. The painting is composed, made part by part, by addition — it has a syntax setting up relationships within the work which calls for absorption. It is a perpetual creation of itself that you experience as a kind of instantaneousness

The whole takes over from the parts. It is unitary, non-relational. The object exists externally and literally as any ordinary object. You walk around it, you don't contemplate it

Yes, Even though it timidly resists gravity by being hung on the wall rather than confronting it by being placed on the floor

As I said before: Minimal works are readable as art, as almost anything is today — including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper.... And they belong to the same order of space as the viewer's body

What is at stake in this conflict is whether the paintings or objects in question are experienced as paintings or as objects

This painting exists independently from the particular place and circumstances in which it is shown. Its presentness is invariable

As a unitary object it is bound to the particular place and circumstances in which it is shown

The object's position in the space, the illumination, the position of the viewer in relation to it, are ever changing variations we experience in real time

You see Stella's painting as theatrical, as bound to the environment and presence in duration. But as a painting it belongs to the instantaneous time of presentness

But it's not a painting

ART A
OBJECT